

March 26, 2009

AN INVITATION TO CO-SPONSOR H.R. 23

**“BELATED THANK YOU TO THE MERCHANT MARINERS OF WORLD
WAR II ACT of 2009”**

Dear Colleague:

During the 110th Congress, H.R. 23, the “Belated Thank You to the Merchant Mariners of World War II Act,” garnered the support of 244 co-sponsors. Since so many of these brave men are dying every day, the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs agreed on a modified version of H.R. 23 which would still provide monthly payments to these veterans but would fund them through appropriations over a 5-year period. This version was passed unanimously by the full House by voice vote, but the Senate did not schedule it for consideration. Therefore, I am re-introducing this important bill. The number remains the same, H.R. 23--I hope it will again enjoy your support.

As you know, Merchant Mariners were an integral part of our victory in World War II. They suffered the highest casualty rate of any of the branches of service while delivering troops, tanks, food, airplanes, fuel and other needed supplies to every theater of the war. Without the services of the Merchant Mariners, it would have been very difficult, if not impossible, to have won World War II.

Unfortunately, they were denied any benefits under the GI Bill of Rights. The Merchant Mariners became the forgotten service. It wasn’t until 1988, after protracted court battles that they were given any benefits and, even then, they did not receive the benefits of many portions of the GI Bill. H.R. 23 would provide a modest payment for the 40-plus years of lost benefits which denied many of them the opportunity to attain a degree, obtain a home loan, or receive compensation for their service-connected injuries like other WWII veterans.

Please continue your support of the Merchant Mariners by again co-sponsoring H.R. 23!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Filner". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

BOB FILNER
Chairman
House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs